

## Obituary

### Laurence John Hartley Teakle 1901-1979

Emeritus Professor Laurence John Hartley Teakle, C.M.G., B.Sc.(Agric), Ph.D., F.A.I.A.S. died in Brisbane, December 8, 1979 after several months affliction with a brain tumour. He was aged 78.

Dr. Teakle had a long association with the Royal Society of Western Australia which he joined in 1928 soon after returning to Western Australia from post-graduate studies in plant nutrition at the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned his Ph.D. He was a member of the Society's Council from 1929 to 1943 and was President in 1937-38 when he contributed "A Regional Classification of the Soils of Western Australia" as his Presidential address. He served as Treasurer for several years and in 1971 Honorary Life Membership was conferred on him.

Hartley Teakle was born in South Australia but came to Western Australia as an infant when his parents became farmers at Isseka north of Geraldton. From Isseka State School he proceeded to Perth Modern School and to the University of Western Australia where he graduated B.Sc.(Agric) in 1923 and won the Amy Saw Scholarship. He was at the University of California from 1924-27. In 1928 he was appointed Plant Nutrition Officer in the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and soon became involved in soil salinity work in the Salmon Gums district and in the proposed 3 500 Farms Scheme area between Southern Cross, Lake King and Salmon Gums. Controversy developed when he reported that soil salinity might restrict agricultural productivity on the proposed farms. The scheme was abandoned in 1930 when the economic depression of that time intensified. From 1930-36 soil survey parties directed by Dr. Teakle made soil and salinity surveys of 400 000 hectares of land in the north-eastern wheatbelt, the Lake King area and at Salmon Gums. In 1937 he began trace element trials using copper and manganese with potatoes and vegetables at Albany and demonstrated responses. In 1939-41 trials with copper gave benefits with cereals in a number of wheatbelt areas. Manganese and zinc responses with cereals were also demonstrated. He also worked on the phosphate requirements of cereals and pastures.

During the Second World War Dr. Teakle controlled the rationing of superphosphate and other fertilisers and was associated with soil conservation problems including the Ord River catchment. In 1946 he became the first Commissioner of Soil Conservation under the Soil Conservation Act 1945, and early in 1947 he accepted appointment as Professor of Agriculture in the University of Queensland. The remainder of his professional career was at that University where he became President of the Professorial Board in 1960, Deputy Vice-Chancellor in 1963 and was later Acting Vice-Chancellor. He retired in 1970 and was made a C.M.G.

In Queensland he developed wide ranging interest in the agricultural and pastoral industries and their associated soils and encouraged research to elucidate problems. He was elected Chairman of the Queensland Wheat Industry Research Committee in 1957 and remained Chairman till 1963 when he was appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland. The Wheat Research Committee sponsored the development of a successful Wheat Research Institute at Toowoomba.

In 1951 he was awarded the Farrer Medal in Agricultural Science and was later elected a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science. The Australian Society of Soil Science made him an Honorary Member for life and he had a Fellowship of the Australian College of Education. The University of Queensland gave him the title of Emeritus Professor and the degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D. *Honoris causa*). A new university building for agriculture was named "Hartley Teakle Building".

After retiring Dr. Teakle spent much time tracing the activities of his forebears, commencing with David Teakle an English migrant who attended the Proclamation of the Colony of South Australia on 28 December, 1836. The result was a book "The David Teakle Saga" published in 1979 shortly before the author's final illness.

Throughout his life, Hartley Teakle was a sincere and ardent worshipper at, and supporter of, the Methodist Church. He is survived by a widow, three sons and a daughter who may reflect with pride on his life and his contribution to science, to education and to church and family life.

G.H.B.